

IN THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-45 (Cancelled)

46. (Currently Amended) A ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism comprising: with

a housing (10) having a C- or U-shaped cross-section with spring-elastic bendable flanks (28) for receiving two carrier rails (20), wherein said ~~which~~ carrier rails, on their facing longitudinal edges, lie against each other forming a linkage axis (22) and, with their away-facing longitudinal edges (24), engage in mounting grooves (26) in the housing flanks (28), and ~~with~~

at least two half-rings (16) longitudinally spaced apart and rigidly connected with each of the carrier rails (20), wherein said ~~and which~~ half-rings (16) extend through openings (12) in a housing wall (13) and together ~~pairwise~~ form a ring (14),

wherein the carrier rails (20) are limitedly pivotable against each other about the linkage axis (22) between an open position and a closed position upon overcoming a spring force along the half-rings (16) ~~forced~~ ~~produced by the bending open of~~ the housing flanks (28), ~~while taking along the half-rings (16),~~ and

wherein at least one blocking element (32, 32') is ~~provided~~ slideable via operating element (18), wherein said at least one blocking element (32, 32') is essentially parallel to the linkage axis (22), wherein said at least one blocking element (32, 32') is slideable relative to the housing (10) and to the carrier rails (20), wherein said at least one blocking element (32, 32')—which, in the closed position, protrudes into a free space (34) formed between the carrier rails (20) and the housing wall (13) and blocks with blockage of the pivot movement of the carrier rails (20) and wherein said at least one blocking element (32, 32'), in the open position, unblocks—permits the pivot movement of the carrier rails (20) about the linkage axis (22), and

wherein thereby characterized, that—at least one blocking element (32, 32') is pre-tensioned in the direction of the closed position under the influence of a closing spring (36, 36').

47. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 46, wherein the operating element (18) is ~~formed as a operating—~~lever pivotable with respect to the housing (10).

48. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 46, wherein the at least one blocking element (32, 32') is slideable in the open direction via the operating element (18) against the force of the closing spring (36, 36'),

and wherein the at least one blocking element (32, 32') is
thereby unlockable.

49. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 46, wherein the at least one blocking element (32, 32'), when in the open position, lies against an opening detent (38, 110) under the influence of the closing spring (36, 36').

50. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 49, wherein the at least one blocking element (32, 32') is releaseable, in the closing direction, via the operating element (18) out of the opening detent (38, ~~110~~40) against the force of the closing spring (36, 36').

51. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 50, wherein the at least one blocking element (32, 32') is automatically lockable in the closed direction under the influence of the pre-tensioned closing spring (36, 36').

52. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 47, wherein the operating element ~~lever~~ (18) includes an opening arm (40) abutting against the carrier rails (20) in the open position and which pivots ~~these~~ said carrier rails (20) from the closed position into the open position while overcoming ~~of~~ the spring force produced by the housing flanks (28).

53. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 47, wherein the operating element ~~lever~~ (18) includes a closing arm (42) abutting against the carrier rails (20) in the closing direction and which pivots ~~these~~ said carrier rails (20) from the open position into the closed position while overcoming ~~of~~ the spring force produced by the housing flanks (28).

54. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 46, wherein the at least one blocking element (32, 32') is slideable in the closing direction against the force of the closing springs (36, 36'), and thereby releasable out of the opening detent (38, 110), directly by operation of the half-rings (16), or indirectly via the carrier rails (20).

55. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 47, wherein the operating element ~~lever~~ (18) in the open and/or closed direction exhibits at least two operating positions effective in different angular positions for a consequential operation of the at least one blocking element (32, 32') and the carrier rails (20).

56. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to one of Claim 47, wherein the blocking element (32) is provided on a lever arm (100) rigidly connected with the operating element ~~lever~~ (18), and ~~that~~ wherein the operating element ~~lever~~ (18) is limitedly pivotable relative to the

housing (10) and to the carrier rails (20) in the sliding direction of the blocking element (32).

57. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 56, wherein the blocking spring (36) is tensioned in between a housing fixed abutment and an operating lever fixed abutment (104, 102).

58. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 57, wherein the blocking spring (36) is a shank spring.

59. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 56, wherein the operating element lever ~~lever~~ (18) includes a control curve (108) guided on one control edge (106) of the housing (10), ~~via which and wherein~~ the operating element lever ~~lever~~ (18) and the blocking element (32), during pivoting against the force of the closing spring (36), are slideable from a closing position in the direction of the open position.

60. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 59, wherein the operating element lever ~~lever~~ (18) is rigidly connected with an opening arm (40) acting, in the opening direction, against the carrier rails.

61. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 60, wherein the opening arm (40) is ~~provided in such a separation~~ separated from the blocking element (32), ~~—)~~

such that the blocking element (32), in the closed position of the operating element lever—(18) and the carrier rails (20), is insertable in the free space (34) between the carrier rails (20) and the housing wall (13) under the influence of the closing spring (36), and, in the open position, abuts against a housing-fixed detent (110) under the influence of the closing spring (36).

62. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 61, wherein the blocking element (32) is simultaneously a closing arm (42) acting in the closing direction against the carrier rails (20).

63. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 56, wherein the operating element lever—(18) includes at least one pivot pin element (112), ~~which~~ that lies in the open position of the operating element lever—(18) against a housing fixed mounting surface (114) under the influence of the closing spring (36) and forms a pivot axis for the blocking element (32) during the disengagement or unblocking and closing movement.

64. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 63, wherein the pivot pin element (112), in the closed position of the operating element lever—(18), is raised from the housing-fixed mounting surface (114).

65. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 56, wherein the control curve (108) is provided on a control arm (120) extending through a wall opening (116) of the housing (10) and through a through-hole (118) in the linkage axis (22) area between the carrier rails (20).

66. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 65, wherein the control edge (106) is formed by a preferably curved border edge of the wall opening (116).

67. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 56, wherein the blocking element (32) is provided on a lever arm (100) extending through a wall opening (116) in the housing.

68. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 67, wherein the housing fixed detent (110) is formed by a preferably curved border edge of the wall opening (116).

69. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 56, wherein the blocking element (32) abuts in the closed direction, under the influence of the closing spring (36), against a housing-fixed end-stop (122).

70. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 69, wherein the end abutment (122) is wedge-shaped in the closing direction.

71. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 69, wherein the end abutment (122) is formed by a bowing out of the housing wall (13) protruding into the free space (34).

72. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 56, wherein the operating element lever ~~(18)~~ is mounted and guided on the housing (10) in the intermediate area between the rings (14), and includes an operating arm (18') extending through ~~the~~ a loop of one of the rings (14).

73. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 72, wherein the operating arm (18') is directed away from the lever arm (100) carrying the blocking element (32).

74. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 72, wherein the operating arm (18') faces the same side as the blocking element (32) carrying lever arm (100).

75. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 47, wherein the at least one blocking element is rigidly provided on a control rod, preferably formed as a pull rod, ~~which via~~ such that the operating element lever ~~(18)~~, under the influence of the closing spring, is limitedly slideable in the longitudinal direction of the carrier rails (20) relative to the housing (10).

76. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 75, wherein the closing spring is a pressure spring.

77. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 76, wherein the operating element lever ~~(18)~~ is provided at one end of the control rod and ~~that wherein the~~ closing spring is tensioned in between the other end of the control rod and a housing fixed abutment.

78. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 77, wherein the operating element lever ~~(18)~~ pulls against the control rod in the open position against the pressure force of the closing spring.

79. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 75, wherein the operating element lever ~~(18)~~ is rigidly connected with an opening arm acting in the opening direction against the carrier rails.

80. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 75, wherein the operating element lever ~~(18)~~ is rigidly connected with a closing arm acting in the closing direction against the carrier rails.

81. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to one of Claims 47, wherein at least one blocking

element (32, 32') is connected with the operating element ~~lever~~ (18) via a tensioning member (44, 44') and a closing spring (36, 36') integrated in the tension member.

82. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 81, wherein each blocking element (32, 32') is associated with a the tension member (44, 44').

83. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 82, wherein at least two of the tension members (44, 44') are unitarily connected with each other, preferably via a connecting bridge (46).

84. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 81, wherein each blocking element (32, 32') is associated with a closing spring (36, 36').

85. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 81, wherein the tension member (44, 44') is a piece of wire.

86. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 81, wherein the closing spring (36, 36') is a shank spring integrated in the tension member (44, 44'), of which one leg (48) is connected with the operating element ~~lever~~ (18) and the other leg (50) is supported on a housing-fixed or carrier rail-fixed mount (52) and is fixed spaced apart from the support point on the associated blocking element (32, 32').

87. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 81, wherein the at least one blocking element (32, 32') is formed as a sliding element guided in a guide slot or through-hole (54) between the two carrier rails (20), which exhibits a wedge shaped closing surface (36) facing in the closing direction, which in the closed position engages in the free space (34).

88. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 87, wherein the sliding element exhibits a face (58) which is wedge or arrow-shaped in the closing direction, and that the guide through-hole (54), on its bordering edge (38) facing the end face (58), exhibits a thereto complimentary arrow shape.

89. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 81, wherein the operating element ~~lever~~ (18) is rigidly connected with an opening arm (40) which lies, when moved in the opening direction, against the carrier rails (20).

90. (Currently Amended) The ring ~~Ring~~ binder mechanism according to Claim 81, wherein the operating element ~~lever~~ (18) is rigidly connected with a closing arm (42) which lies, when moved in the closing direction, against the carrier rails (20).